

Contending for the faith

Hosea 2:1-13

Jesus made a promise in Matthew 16:18. *“I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* This promise cannot fail, but it comes at great sacrifice and with a warning that Satan would provide an abundance of opposition, beginning first against Christ. **Zechariah** warned of this in **13:7**, 500 years before Christ, *“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”* (Build my church)

From the moment of his birth wicked men, (including us), sought the life of Christ and though we perpetrated the death of the Shepherd, it was purposed by God, and his death brought the hand of mercy and grace upon the little ones, the little flock of God. The gates of hell could not take the shepherd; *“no man taketh my life”* nor one of these little ones. *“I will lose nothing.”* Hence the need to contend for the faith (**Hosea 2:1-2**). It is by the preaching of this faith the elect are reborn again.

In **V 3-4** of his epistle, **Jude** writes, *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith, (common salvation, only one of its kind) which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

To date there are over 2,200 known cults, sects and denominations in religion with as many gospels, where men have crept in unawares and turned grace into lasciviousness, i.e.; they oppose God's common salvation. Their so called grace is nothing more than a cleverly disguised system of works. Some come with doctrines so subtle, if it were possible they would deceive even the elect. They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. (Unlawful desires) They focus on man's unbridled lust to be saved by his works, which denies the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ and thereby deceives many. This too, once was our way.

In Christ's prayer in **John 17: 3**, he defines life. *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only **true** God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”* Historical, and or, carnal knowledge is not salvation. God's people shall know him in his redemptive glory as a Just God and Savior; how He can be just and justify the ungodly. (Isaiah 45) God's people shall know Christ, the God-Man in his mediatorial offices as Prophet, Priest and King as Him who *“Is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.”* (Romans 10:4) God's people shall know him in his redemptive glory, as the one who came in time and accomplished redemption for those given him in Christ before the foundation of the world.

To the Elect of God has been given an unchangeable standing of justification in Christ Jesus *“before the world began.”* Although our state before God changes constantly, our standing in Christ is eternal. It cannot change. This common faith is the gift of a merciful God to reveal to those in Christ of that standing and state. To challenge this truth, certain men creep in unawares and spread their deceptive doctrines by trying to mix works with grace; which is all the more reason we must earnestly contend for the faith. God is glorified in it, Christ is exalted in it and the elect’s position in Christ is uncovered in the hearing of this faith.

The prophecy of Hosea is a love story of God for his people. But the love of God for his people is not demonstrated at the expense of his holiness and justice. God’s love is that which provides what his justice and holiness demands. It is the story of a Just God and Savior **requiring**, and a sinless Substitute **providing** the only righteousness that will vindicate a holy God in his declaration of the justification of his people before time, based on the certainty of that righteousness being established in time. It is this faith for which we contend.

Hosea offers several perspectives on this subject. Today we will look at three. **Contending for the faith is:**

Authored by the Lord. Hosea 1. *“Looking to Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith.”*
Authorized by the Lord. Hosea 2:1-2. *“He gave some apostles, some prophets, for the perfecting of the saints.”*
Attended by the Lord. V3-10 *“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*

1. Contending for the faith is authored by the Lord. Hosea 1

In **Jeremiah 31:34**, God, through the Prophet declares; *“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

Just as surely as Christ is the *“Author and finisher of our faith,”* (Hebrews 12:2) is the fact that every one for whom he died will share in that common faith. 1 John 1:3: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”* Our faith (gospel) declares it to be so.

His obedience and death insure the elects believing. Except our faith (our gospel) be authored by Christ, we look to an idol. *“If any man come preaching another Jesus...”*

And what is that faith (that gospel)? It is that body of doctrine, the truth, the gospel of a finished salvation, accomplished by the obedience, suffering and death of the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ to satisfy the demands of God’s holy law and justice. It is that work he finished when he *“brought near his righteousness,”* (Isaiah 46; 13) and freely imputed it to his elect. In **Hosea 1:1-9** we have, in types the example of faith authored by the Lord. Hosea’s obedience to the Lord’s commands had a view to this faith. At the command of God to *“take thee a wife of*

whoredoms” **Hosea 1:3**, “Went and **took** Gomer.” What follows is God’s revelation in pictures and types of Christ to establish this faith and his dogmatic contending of this faith.

Hosea, a type of Christ took Gomer, a type of Israel for his wife. Gomer was an unfaithful wife. She was a woman of whoredoms, because she departed from the Lord. (**Hosea 1:2**) She had many lovers. (**2:5**) To Gomer was born children of whoredoms. For her infidelity, God prophetically warned Israel. **Hosea 1:3-6**, “Call the son born to Gomer, Jezreel (scatter) for I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.” **V-6**; “At the birth of her daughter God said; “call her name Loru-hamah, meaning “I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel.” **V8-9**; At the birth of her second son God said; “call his name Lo-am’mi, meaning, you are not my people and I will not be your God.” **V-6**. “**I will utterly take them away.**” So much so that today not one of the Jewish descendants can say for sure, “I am from this or that tribe.” **Hosea 2:4**, “I will not have mercy on her children.” Her children are not my children. Her children are children of the devil. How so? Her children are those of her lovers. Her lovers are the enemies of grace. Her lovers represent those who seek justification and life by their obedience to the Law of God and reject the grace of God in Christ. **All that are not Christ’s children are the devils.** Who are God’s children? He just told us who are not his children.

Hosea 1:10-11, “**YET**,” out of an innumerable number of the children of Israel shall a remnant be preserved. Of this scattering whereof it was said, (**1:9**) “you are not my people, it shall be said unto them, (The Elect) ye are the sons of the Living God. (**V-10b**)” Out of those scattered to the four winds of the earth shall God gather together with Judah, (**V-11**) and they shall be united together as one (Spiritual Israel, Jew and Gentile, the Church) under Christ their Head. And they shall come up out of the land; from every kindred tongue, tribe and nation. Why, because God declared a number justified based on his free, sovereign, electing grace and set Christ up as their Surety to bring in everlasting righteousness, freely imputed to them, which insures they will be made to rest their faith in him whom they appointed (agreed, **V-11**) to be their Head. Read **Romans 9:22-33**. What a great and glorious day Jezreel has been and will be. This gathering from among the scattered by Christ is the reward of his contending for the faith. He is the author of it. He purposed it, he planned it, and he perfected it. He earnestly contended for it. Luke 9:51 “And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” What was his mission in Jerusalem?

Paul answers in **Romans 9:28**.

He “will finish the work.” (Man continues to work) Said he to his Father in John 17:4, “I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” Paul wrote in Romans 10:4, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Christ, as it were, “finished the work” of the Law. He satisfied every jot and tittle of it, as to the salvation of sinners by perfect obedience to every precept and penalty of it. In his short ministry he declared the whole counsel of God, obeyed God’s law completely, suffered, bled and died, was buried and rose again the third day and ascended to the right hand of the Father, **and sat down** as a victorious conqueror. In so doing, he glorified and vindicated the

Father in the justification of his sheep. **Romans 8:3-4**, “For what the law could not do in that it was **weak through the flesh**, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, (Christ’s flesh) that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” Christ’s one act of obedience accomplished what hundreds of years under the law could never accomplish; declare a sinner righteous based on his obedience to it. His work brought near a perfect righteousness. The law, after hundreds of years of careful observance accomplished nothing toward the sinner’s salvation, except as a “Schoolmaster”. The righteousness of Christ, **though accomplished in time is an everlasting righteousness**. It stands eternally. (Daniel 9:24, Psalm 119:142) His was a short work on earth but it **has stood and will stand** forever as a testimony of the faith authored by, and anchored in the Lord.

Contending for the faith is a noble cause. Jesus said of himself; “For this cause came I into the world:” to confirm the faith, (Moses wrote of me.) Communicate the faith and contend for it.

1. Contending for the faith is authored by the Lord. Hosea 1, He is our faith.

2. Contending for the faith is authorized by the Lord. Hosea 2:1-2.

In **Matthew 28:19-20**, Christ’s last words to his disciples before he ascended to the Father were: “All authority has been give unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

He is here authorizing his disciple to contend for the faith.

In **Hosea 2:1-2**, God identifies those he authorizes to contend for the gospel. They are the brothers of Ammi and the sisters of Ru-hamah. Who are Ammi and Ru-hamah? They are that remnant of the “**scattered**” come up out of the land, qualified and commissioned to preach the gospel to Israel. (Gomer) They are those out of that number as the sands of the sea whom our Sovereign God declares righteous in his sight. They are the remnant out of Israel, which God swore in **Hosea1:6** “would no more have mercy upon the house of Israel” God would no more call Israel his people and would no more be their God. He called them Loammi and Lo-ruhmah. “Lo” means “not” No more mercy and not my people. **BUT** of the nation Israel, some would be called no more “Lo-ami and Loru-hama, but Ammi and Ru-hamah, **(my people)** sinners saved by the grace of God: sinners of the faith, appointed by God to contend for the faith. **Read Hosea 2:23.**

Are you a contender for the faith? We are all contenders, **but for what faith?** How can we tell, by our message. For what do we contend? **Hosea 2:2**, “Plead with your mother.” (Israel) “Brethren my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is salvation.” What is our message?

“You are not God’s wife and he is not your husband.” But, was not Israel God’s chosen ones? **Deuteronomy 7:7-8**; *“The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh.”*

For hundreds of years God was longsuffering toward Israel. He swore to the fathers that Israel would be a great nation and out of that nation would be a spiritual nation. It was for the little flock he set his love upon. He would preserve the tribe of Judah until the time of Messiah but Israel’s destruction was eminent. He would build his church (Jew and Gentile, spiritual Israel) and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

What is the message of his church for which we contend? (**Hosea 2:2**) *“I am not Gomer’s husband and Gomer is not my wife.”* You cannot marry **grace** and **works**. Though chosen of God, the vast majority of Israel perished in unbelief. Only a remnant would be saved. To the nation as a whole, they would reject Christ and seek justification by the works of the law. These are the lovers Gomer embraced and pursued. Since *“no man can serve two masters,* (Matthew 6:24) God calls idolaters, all who seek justification by the law. Is not this the message we all reject by nature? When you were first confronted with the Faith (the gospel) which exposed your idolatry, did it not offend you? Is this not one of the first revelations in salvation; are you an idolater? No man is saved from idolatry before he is saved from idolatry, until he is saved from idolatry. Until a sinner faces this truth, all else is irrelevant. Israel (and Gomer) claimed; *“we be Abraham’s seed, we were never in bondage.”* So did you and so did I. (John 8:33) and yet, in **V5b** Gomer proves her idolatry. *“I go after my lovers* (all who promote and preach works and oppose grace.) To this claim by Gomer (Israel) God responds in **v-2**. **“Tell Gomer:”**

“Let her therefore put away her whoredoms from out of her sight. Gomer, everything you see is whoredoms and everything you feel, say and do is affected by what you see with the physical eye. There is no spiritual discernment by this eye. By nature it is dark. Matthew 6:23; *“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.”* We judge evil good and good evil. The way that seems right unto us is the way of death. Everything we think, say or do is (**V-5**) shameful. It is whoredom. It is evidence that we are in bed with that great whore, Babylon, False religion. **John 3:19** is the indictment against us all by nature: *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men love darkness (they love their law keeping) rather than light (Christ’s righteousness imputed) because their deeds are evil.”* Their eye is dark and everything they see and do is only darkness. And the results: what the eyes see influences who we are.

Hosea 2:2. *“Let her therefore put away her adulteries from between her breasts.”* What the eye sees, the mind processes and moves the heart. The heart is the center of the emotions. It is the mind, affections and will of man. Therefore, *“as a man thinketh, in his heart so is he.”* **Mark 7:21**, *“for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, (mind) adulteries, fornications, murders.”* (motives) All we can produce by nature is *“Dead works and fruit unto death”* because we are ignorant of Christ’s righteousness and go about to establish our own.

Where was Gomer's (Israel) heart: **Read V5**, the same place as every sinner before regeneration and conversion. What in reality is Gomer's sin? Is it not her desire to be justified before God by her law keeping? **V5**, Sinners, motivated by feelings over facts go after their lover, that's where their heart is. (They accuse true disciples of not loving.) They go after their lovers for those things they hold dear. Their lovers are those 2,200 plus denominations who encourage what man's evil heart desires: justification by works of the law. Here's proof. They give me **my** bread, not the **Bread of Life**. They give me **my** water, not the **Water of Life**. They give me **my** wool and **my** flax (they cover me in self-righteousness), not his righteousness. (2:9) They give me **my** oil and **my** drink. They speak peace where there is no peace, leaving me in a false sense of security.

Notice the **MY**. These are mine because I earned them. How did Gomer earn her possessions? She gave herself to her lovers. That's what we do in false religion. I gave myself over to my lovers, the law keepers, all the while saying grace, grace. I didn't even know the true and living God so my supply had to be attributed to an idol. **And**, God says in Romans 10:1-4, all who do not know God seek acceptance with God by their law keeping. I was attributing to an idol those things given by our Sovereign God. That's what evidences us all to be idolaters. Being ignorant of the true and living God and his righteousness imputed, we automatically attribute to an idol those things given by God. (Romans 10:1-4) **James 1:17** *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."*

When you thanked God today for his blessings to you, if the god in your mind was not the **Just God and Savior** revealed in Isaiah 45:21, you *"went after your lovers"* (idols) as did Gomer, the idolater. What distinguishes the God in Isaiah 45:21 from all other gods? He demands perfection, found only in his Son. He is pleased only with the work of his Son to secure the salvation of his people by satisfying law and justice and bringing in everlasting righteousness which is all our salvation. If you think anything but the imputed righteousness of Christ can recommend you to God, you are as your mother, Gomer. Your name has not changed: it is still Loru-hamah and or Loammi. The faith you believe is not anchored in grace but of works. Your mind is still darkened and your heart is wicked and God commands you to **put away your whoredoms**.

How do we put away our whoredoms? First of all we **put away** from out of our sight, we change our mind concerning the God we worship and the Christ we serve. We see *"what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh."* Second, *"we see God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."* We repent of former idolatry and dead works and look **by faith** to Him in whose flesh sin was condemned.

Thirdly we sorrow over our sins with godly sorrow, without fear of punishment. *"Create in me a clean heart, O God"* is our prayer. Fourthly, we offer sinners no hope of salvation by God based on anything they do and we rest in him and his righteousness imputed for all our salvation. We desire nothing more, need nothing more and look by faith for nothing more than the righteousness Christ brought near by his obedience unto death, freely imputed to us before the world began.

Are you contending for this faith? Has your name changed? **Read 2:23.** Has God owned you as his people? Is he your God? If so, he authorizes you to earnestly contend for the faith.

Philippians 1:27 *“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”*

Contending for the faith is authored by the Lord, it is authorized by the Lord and:

In our next message from Hosea we will consider the third truth:

3. Contending for the faith is attended by the Lord. ðLo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world.ö

His attendance with us is vital to our success. For us, his commission to us is attended with his comfort and courage for us to earnestly contend for the faith.

To those to whom we minister the gospel, his Spirit is vital for their regeneration and conversion.

“He will guide you into all truth.” Without the Spirit’s teaching no sinner will put away his whoredoms from before his eyes. But *“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”*

That power is unleashed in the earnest contending for the faith.

Are you a contender? More so, are you an earnest contender? More so, are you contender for the faith?

By Winston Pannell